

Reciprocal Observation of Teaching

2013

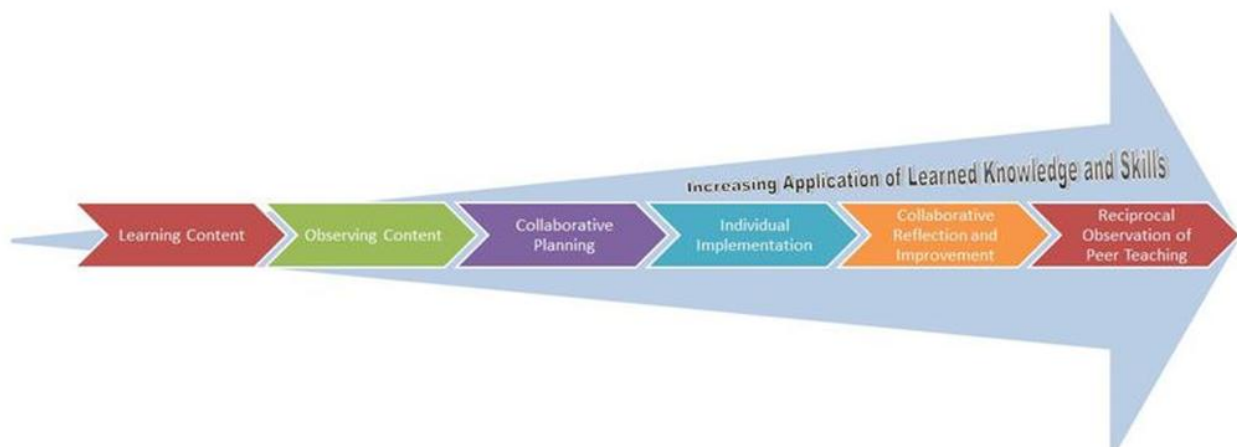


Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
RECIPROCAL OBSERVATION OF TEACHING PRINCIPLES	2
GETTING STARTED WITH THE OBSERVATION PROCESS	3
Initiating the process:	3
How teaching partners are selected:.....	3
Effective peer observations:	3
THE OBSERVATION PROCESS	4
Pre-observation meeting	4
Observing the lesson	5
Ways to gather data during reciprocal peer observations:	5
Post-observation meeting	7
APPENDIX A: PRE-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS	8
APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION QUESTIONS AND TOOLS	9
Physical Map:	9
Using Bloom’s Taxonomy to Examine Levels of Questions:.....	10
Open-ended Observation	11
APPENDIX C: POST-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS	14
REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	15
Classroom Video Exemplars	16
Additional “Teachers Observing Teachers” Models	17

INTRODUCTION

Reciprocal observation of teaching is a powerful form of professional development that benefits both the teacher being observed and the one observing. This process between colleagues is done generally for two purposes:

1. As a means of obtaining feedback on our teaching. The process involves asking a colleague (an LST member, a grade/subject area team member, a grade team, a plc team, etc.) to attend one of your classes and afterwards you discuss it. Your colleague(s) can provide data on an area that you are working on specific to your growth plan, an area of specific interest or an area of concern for you.
2. As an opportunity to go into a colleagues classroom to watch a strategy or a concept modeled for you (for your own learning)

This booklet has been written to support the process of reciprocal observation of teaching in Chinook's Edge. It is intended as a practical guide to the process for participants.

RECIPROCAL OBSERVATION OF TEACHING PRINCIPLES

The goal of reciprocal observation of teaching is to enhance teaching quality by encouraging reflection on practice. It is intended to help maintain and grow quality teaching and learning by spreading good practice, encouraging the exchange of views and providing opportunities for staff to learn about and discuss new or alternative teaching approaches.

The following principles underpin the Chinook's Edge approach to Collaborative Reciprocal observation of teaching:

1. It is a developmental rather than a judgemental process.
2. The teacher requesting a reciprocal observation of teaching determines the area of data collection and the process of data collection.
3. The teacher asking to observe a colleague does so with the assumption that practice is not being judged but rather it is a learning opportunity to see a concept in action.
4. Data collected is done as a formative process, never as an evaluative process.
5. The discussion and outcomes of the process are confidential.

A comparison of reciprocal observation of teaching and evaluation:

Reciprocal Observation of Teaching	Teacher Evaluation
Give-and-take; sharing both ways	One way learning
Non-threatening (peers)	<i>Sometimes</i> threatening (supervisor)
Growth model; improvement oriented	Judgement is made at a point in time
Data: given to teacher for reflection	Data: judgement of effectiveness
Colleague collects data. The goal is to be "helpful and useful" for your	Administrator collects data for evaluation purposes

colleague who is being observed.	
Formative for personal growth	Summative, often for contractual purposes

GETTING STARTED WITH THE OBSERVATION PROCESS

Initiating the process: It is up to an individual staff member to initiate an observation by inviting a colleague (an LST member, a grade/subject area team member, a grade team, a plc team, etc.) to sit in on a lesson at a time convenient to both OR to ask if it would be okay to observe a colleague model a practice .

How teaching partners are selected:

- The key to a successful reciprocal observation of peer teaching is mutual trust and respect.
- Experience shows that observation by a peer(s) from the same school or subject area/department is often the most useful.
- It may be appropriate for reciprocal observation of peer teaching to involve groups of five or six people who observe each other.
- For smaller schools, observation by a peer from a colleague in a different school and within a related subject may prove appropriate and useful.

Effective peer observations:

- Are sustained over time
- Require a recognition that the process will be mutually beneficial
- Require a clear purpose and communication
- Lead to positive changes in teaching and learning
- Should have student learning at the heart

THE OBSERVATION PROCESS

Pre-conversation:

This meeting involves the person who will be observed and the individual or team who will be doing the observation. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss:

- ☐ The lesson
- ☐ the specific purpose, question or focus of the visit (observing to collect data or observing to watch a concept being modelled)
- ☐ the data that will be collected (connected to a growth plan goal, a specific area of interest, an area of concern)
- ☐ how the data will be collected
- ☐ how to explain the observer's presence to the students (if necessary)
- ☐ whether the teacher being observed wants the observer to talk to students.

The person who is being observed '**owns**' the process and should feel confident in proposing the ground-rules, criteria and method.

The person being observed should:

- ☐ explain the goal of the lesson and give any contextual information that will help the observer appreciate what s/he sees;
- ☐ make sure the observer is clear on the areas in which data will be collected
- ☐ give the observer essential information (about time and location)
- ☐ establish when the observer should arrive and where s/he will sit.

The observer(s) should:

- ☐ listen;
- ☐ ask questions to clarify if necessary;
- ☐ agree with the colleague to be observed on how to collect data (see next section).

See Appendix A for Sample Pre-Observation Questions:

Observing the lesson or concept

- The person observing should arrive on time and collect the data based on the agreed upon goals.
- The observer(s) takes descriptive (rather than interpretive or evaluative) notes on student actions and/or teacher actions

Ways to gather data during reciprocal peer observations:

(These processes are dependent on the goal of the observation. The observer should **refrain from using any instruments that require a judgement to be made – e.g. checklists, scales**)

- **Selective Verbatim:** Word-for-word record of what individual learners and/or the teacher says about a particular issue or some other area of focus (e.g. the observer records the exact wording of the questions asked by the teacher and student responses, keeps note of the questions that learners ask, records the exact conversation between specific learners, etc.). (**Exemplar:** <http://assist.educ.msu.edu/assist/school/mentor/workwith/toolobsselectiveverbatim.htm>)
- **Anecdotal Record:** Description of events or episodes that occur during the class (e.g. the observer records the story of what happens among learners when the teacher leaves the classroom, or records the behaviors and conversation between learners as they negotiate how to work in small groups).
- **Verbal Flow:** A written or visual description of who talks with whom. You may wish to use a map of the classroom to do this or record who says what (e.g. the observer maps who initiates the conversation, who responds, who follows, who is silent, who is addressed, who is left out, etc.). (**Template Exemplar:** http://www.d214.org/assets/1/workflow_staging/Documents/3603.PDF)
- **Class Traffic:** A written record of who moves inside the room at what times. A map of the classroom is helpful for this strategy (e.g. who enters and exits, movement from large group to small groups, who goes where). This description can include the rationale for the traffic (if provided) and how learners and the teacher respond to the traffic.
- **Event Count:** A record of the number of times something in particular occurs (e.g. the number of times the teacher interacts with a learner, the number of times learners interrupt one another, the number of times learners initiate a discussion, the number of times there are periods of silence, etc.).

- **Duration:** A record of how much time is spent on a particular event or activity (e.g. the amount of time learners talk informally versus “on task,” the amount of time the teacher speaks versus learners, the amount of time learners have to quietly reflect, the amount of time learners have to work with one another, etc.).
- **Time Sample:** an observation of what happens within a given period of time, coded with tallies or symbols while the behavior is occurring; used to document the frequency of specific behaviors. (e.g., a record of what learners are doing every five minutes, or what is happening in the classroom every five minutes). **(Use of time observation form exemplar:**
http://www.d214.org/human_resources/observation_techniques_and_forms1.a.spx)
- **Physical Map (see Appendix B for sample):** A drawing or map of where tables and chairs are located and the activities that happen there.
- **Critical Incident:** use critical incident analysis when something goes wrong, we need to ask what happened and what caused it to happen. The guiding principle is to frame incidents as questions. For example, 'students always come late to my class' changes to 'why do students always come late to my class? In this way, critical incidents can become turning points and lead to changes to our understanding. In asking 'why did I do that?' or 'why did I let them do that?' we are working on the values in our practice.
<http://www.prodait.org/approaches/cia/analysis.php>)
- **Use Video:** capture data by recording with a camera (e.g. iPad, tablet, etc.). Depending on the data to be collected, the amount of video collected will vary (don't have to record an entire class period
http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/tlr/peer_obs/ch3.shtml#A9).
(Video self-reflection exemplar ~ See also Appendix B:
http://www.d214.org/human_resources/observation_techniques_and_forms1.a.spx)

(Source: http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/teach/mentor_b.pdf)

Post-observation meeting

Detail will be easiest to recall if the debrief follows immediately or soon after, the observation. The data collected should be given to the teacher who was observed to reflect upon. It is often best to let the observed person have first comment on how they felt the session went, or to lead the entire session. Use the data as the guide to the conversation.

This meeting should be a conversation between colleagues, not the delivery of a judgment.

1. Ensure your observations are guided by discussions you have had with your colleague.
2. Share with your colleague a copy of any information you have collected about his or her teaching before having conversations about that information.
3. Limit excessive praise (or criticism). In providing feedback, try to focus on the data rather than judgment or opinion.
4. If offering suggestions for change, encourage your colleagues to consider “different ways” rather than “only one way”. By focusing on alternatives solutions, you can foster reflective practice.
5. Whenever you can, use video. Video feedback is one of the most powerful ways to promote positive changes in human behavior.

(David Townsend, 2010)

See Appendix C for sample post-observation questions

APPENDIX A: PRE-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

Sample #1

Pre-observation Questions:

1. How can I be of help to you? What are some of the goals you are working towards in your growth plan?
2. What will be happening in the class I observe?
3. What are your goals and expectations for the lesson? What do you hope students will gain from this lesson?
4. What do you expect the students will be doing in class to reach these goals?
5. What specifically do you wish me to look for and collect data on?
 - i. Is there a particular student you would like me to watch?
 - ii. Is there a particular strategy you are working on that you'd like me to watch?
6. How would you like me to record the information?
7. Is there anything I can do during your lesson that would be helpful?
8. When can we get together after the lesson?

Sample #2

Pre-observation Questions

1. What are the objectives or planned outcomes of the lesson?
2. What will you be doing?
3. What will your students be doing?
4. How will you know if the lesson has been successful?
5. What should be the main focus of my attention? What would you like me to collect data on?
6. How would you like me to collect the data?
7. Are there any special circumstances I should be aware of?

Sample #3 – going into a classroom to observe a concept being modelled

- Be clear with your colleague on your goal of the observation – what you hope to see. Find out if you should be there for the whole lesson or a portion of the lesson.
- Ask if there is anything you can do to be helpful for your colleague while you are in his or her classroom

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION QUESTIONS AND TOOLS

Physical Map: At Task / Proximity/ Teacher Movement

Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Examine Levels of Questions:

Teacher:	Observer:
Observation Date:	Start time: End Time:
Total Observation Time:	Period of the Day:
Number of Students:	Grade:
Class:	Lesson Topic:
Post-observation conference date:	

Teacher Question	Directed to: Class (C) Male Student (M) Female Student (F)	Wait time	Taxonomy level					
			K	C	A	A	S	E

Open-ended Observation

Teacher:	
Date:	
Time:	

Notes:

What did I see?	What did I hear?

VIDEO SELF OBSERVATION

Name:

Date of Video:

Today's Date:

Class:

Period:

School:

This form may be helpful to you as you watch your class video.

1. Demonstrated expressive, animated, and articulate oral expression.	Comments:
2. Began lesson effectively.	
3. Clearly stated the objectives and purpose of each activity.	
4. Explained the directions for activities clearly.	
5. Encouraged equitable student participation.	
6. Gave adequate time for student response.	

7. Moved around classroom appropriately.	
8. Effectively checked for understanding.	
9. Used a variety of instructional techniques.	
10. Maintained smooth transitions.	
11. Consistently monitored student behavior.	
12. Closed the lesson effectively.	

List some other observations you had as you watched your video:

(Source: http://www.d214.org/human_resources/observation_techniques_and_forms1.aspx)

APPENDIX C: POST-OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

After examining the data collected:

1. How do you think the lesson went?
2. Can you recall what the students were doing that made you feel this way?
3. What do you remember about what you did or the strategies you used?
4. How does this compare with what you expected would happen?
5. What could be some reasons it happened this way?

So, you want to give feedback?

OPINION/JUDGEMENT OF DATA COLLECTED	DESCRIPTION/QUESTION
"I noticed that most of your questions called for factual responses."	"These are some of the questions you asked. What was your goal in asking these questions? Do you think the questions accomplished your objective?"
"You presented the assignment in a confusing way."	"I noticed that the students had a lot of questions about...What sense do you make of this?"
"Not many people responded."	What does your data tell you about who responded and the number of responses to the questions posed?
"You've made a lot of progress since I last observed your class. Well done!"	"I noticed that compared to the last time I observed your class, you have decided to try to wait longer after asking a thought-provoking question. It seemed to me the students have responded to this and your class discussions are less focused on you as the 'all-knowing instructor'. Well done! How do you feel about this change?"
"I don't think your concern about (concern) is important."	"I hear you saying you are concerned about (concern). Why is that? How do you see that issue affecting the class?"
"Why haven't you tried...?"	"Have you considered trying...? How do you think that would work in this class?"
"Yes, we all have that problem. There's not much you can do." [In response to hearing the colleague cite a constraint such as time or pre-determined curriculum as preventing them from trying a different teaching style]	"Lack of time is a common problem. I agree with you that it would be worthwhile to try to incorporate this method. Let's brainstorm ways to work around this constraint..."

(Adapted from: University of Minnesota:

<http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/instruments/index.html>)

REFERENCES AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Resource	Link	Description
Education World	http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin297.shtml	Good discussion of teachers observing teachers
Institute for Teaching, Learning and Academic Leadership	http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/tlr/peer_obs/ch3.shtml	Good overview of peer observation – talks about use of video
Learning Walks	http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/region/loddon/mallee/lt-littlelearningwalks.pdf	templates and processes for PLC teams/departments
Peer Observations	http://prezi.com/nnym1x3dbjy9/peer-observation/	Good classroom video exemplars

Classroom Video Exemplars

(Note: While these lessons are based on curriculum from the United States, they are very useful in the examination of instructional practice)

Grade/Lesson	Link	Description
Kindergarten: Making Break Together	http://www.learner.org/resources/series166.html?pop=yes&pid=1772	Ms. Gonzalez uses this lesson to introduce her students to several economic concepts, including production and cooperation. Using a children's book as a guide, Ms. Gonzalez reviews with her students how people work cooperatively on an assembly line to make a product. The students then experience the concepts of production and distribution through an activity in which they create an assembly line in the classroom and prepare hand-made bread.
Grade 1: Historical Change	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1769	In this first grade classroom, students are studying the history of farming through a lesson that compares farming in eighteenth-century New England to current-day practices. The lesson uses literature and the study of various farming tools and products to illuminate the changes that have taken place in the industry over time and in different parts of the country. The lesson includes group activity and discussion.
Grade 4: Making a Difference Through Giving	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1779	Ms. Jones-Inge presents a complex lesson that focuses on the theme of giving. Ms. Jones-Inge has students work in teams to determine a meaningful service project addressing the needs within their school, community, country, or world. Through thoughtful voting and collaborative decision making, students must determine the goal and scale of their project.
Grade 5: Explorers in North America	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1775	Mr. Cuddi's lesson introduces the theme of exploration in North America, posing three essential questions: How have people in history affected our lives today?; How do the human and physical systems of the Earth interact?; and What role do economies play in the foundation of our history?
Grade 7: Population and Resource Distribution	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1785	This lesson focuses on a population simulation that explores world economics, demonstrating the inequalities in land, food, energy, and wealth distribution in the world today. Using a global map on the classroom floor, students are able to visualize how resources are distributed in both wealthy and under-developed nations of the world.
Grade 9: Competing Ideologies	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1791	Mr. Brooks' ninth-grade class focuses on a variety of political ideologies present during the period of World War I. His class includes lively discussion on capitalism, communism, totalitarianism, and Nazism, as portrayed by leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini. In his lesson, Mr. Brooks incorporates a Socratic discussion into his lesson, as well as group activities and presentations.

Grade 12: The Individual in Society	http://www.learner.org/vod/vod_window.html?pid=1794	Mr. Poon's 12th-grade lesson focuses on the role of the individual in society. Based on readings by various philosophers, including Reinhold Niebuhr, Thomas Hobbes, Mao Zedong, Martha Nussbaum, and Plato, students apply the philosophers' viewpoints to solve the dilemmas of a fictitious nation called "Fenway." They then participate in a dynamic class discussion about how to integrate the best philosophical ideas to address Fenway's problems.
-------------------------------------	---	--

Additional "Teachers Observing Teachers" Models

A variety of approaches to teacher observation support professional growth and student achievement. The following are several of those methods:

Lesson Study -- In this three-pronged approach designed by Japanese educators, teachers collaboratively develop a lesson, observe it being taught to students, and then discuss and refine it.

Critical Friends Group (CFG) -- This program provides time and structure in a teacher's schedule for professional growth linked to student learning. Each CFG is composed of eight to 12 teachers and administrators, under the guidance of at least one coach, who meet regularly to develop collaborative skills, reflect on their teaching practices, and look at student work. [See an Education World article, [Critical Friends Groups: Catalysts for School Change](#).]

Learning Walk -- [The Learning Walk](#), created by the Institute for Learning at the University of Pittsburgh, is a process that invites participants to visit several classrooms to look at student work and classroom artifacts and to talk with students and teachers. Participants then review what they have learned in the classroom by making factual statements and posing questions about the observations. The end result is that teachers become more reflective about their teaching practices. Professional development is always linked to The Learning Walks.